DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 281 959 UD 025 516

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TITLE Black Women's Academic Education in the South. History of Black Women's Education in the South, 1865-Present. Instructional Modules for Educators, Modules III and IV.
INSTITUTION James Madison Univ., Harrisonburg, Va.
SPONS AGENCY Women's Educational Equity Act Program (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 14p.; For modules 1 and 2, see UD 025 514-515. Photographs will not reproduce clearly.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Historical Materials (060)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Education; *Black Education; Black History; Extracurricular Activities; Females; *High Schools; *Postsecondary Education; Private Education; Racial Bias; Reconstruction Era; Regional Characteristics; *School Segregation; Sex Stereotypes; United States History; *Womens Education; Womens Studies
IDENTIFIERS *Black Womens Studies; United States (South)

ABSTRACT

This document is the combined third and fourth modules of a series of four. It is designed to help educators learn more about how the double biases of sex and race have affected the quality of black women's high school and college education in southern schools since the Civil War. The following topics are discussed: (1) education of black women before the Civil War; (2) the purpose of black's academic education; (3) the founding of black colleges; (4) founding of private and public high schools for blacks; (5) academic education in high schools and colleges from 1900 to 1950; (6) extracurricular life in high school and college; and (7) black women in academic education today. Also included are short articles on Mary McLeod Bethune, secondary vocational training, pay inequity, and college women of Atlanta University in 1900. Questions for discussion and activities for enrichment, and a bibliography are included. (PS)

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Black Women's Academic Education in the South.

History of Black Women's Education in the South,

1865-Present. Instructional Modules for Education,

MODULES III and IV

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Preface

This document is the combined third and fourth modules of four designed to help educators learn more about the double bias that has faced black women in Southern schools since the Civil War. It is hoped that learning about this heritage will sensitize them to black girls' and women's current educational needs and will help them appreciate black women's present successes, efforts to achieve, and achievements.

This document describes the historical development of elementary, vocational, high school, and college education for black girls and women in the South. Each contains notes, a bibliography, questions for discussion, and suggested activities. The modules may be used separately or as a set.

These materials were created by Elizabeth L. Ihle at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, with the assistance of a grant from the Women's Educational Equity Act program. James Madison provided an initial faculty research grant to get the study underway, and the Rockefeller Archive Center provided a grant which facilitated the use of its materials. Dr. Ihle wishes to acknowledge the following libraries' and archives' cooperation in her research: Bennett College, Fisk University, Huston-Tillotson College, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University, the Schlesinger Library of Harvard-Radcliffe, the Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina, Spelman College, the Rockefeller Archive Center, the Schlesinger Library of Radcliffe College, Tennessee State University, and Virginia State University.

A number of individuals contributed expertise to the project, and a debt of gratitude is owed to them all. Drs. Faustine Jones-Wilson of Howard University and Beverly Guy-Sheftall of Spelman College reviewed the manuscript and made many helpful suggestions, though Dr. Ihle takes full responsibility for any inadequacies still remaining. Their insightful comments, patience, and enthusiasm are deeply appreciated. The module was also field-tested by undergraduates at James Madison University. Their assistance and that of their instructors, Dr. Violet A. Allain and Mr. George Joyce, offered the author valuable student and faculty perspectives on the module. The grant support staff of the Women's Educational Equity Act offered important counsel whenever called upon. Finally, John Blair Reeves, the author's husband, was a source of encouragement and the epitome of support. To all of these people, the author expresses appreciation.

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Produced under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, under the auspices of the Women's Educational Equity Act. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the grantee, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

Introduction

When this grant was proposed, the module on black women's high school education was supposed to be entirely separate from the one on college education. However, research results dictated otherwise. They demonstrated such a close interrelationship between the two levels of schooling that separating them would have been artificial and necessitated unnecessary repetition of the arguments about blacks' academic education. For these reasons, modules three and four have been combined.

For those who wish to examine only high school education or college education, read the first two sections as background and then examine the specific sections of interest.

Before the Civil War

Before the Civil War black women had been admitted to a few private seminaries and to some public schools in the East and Middle West. Oberlin College in Ohio, for instance, had admitted them from its founding in 1833, and a few black women had graduated from its preparatory school and from its ladies seminary before the Civil War. Oberlin also produced the first black woman college graduate in the nation, Mary Jane Patterson, who completed the Oberlin college curriculum in 1862, nearly thirty years after the first white woman had earned a degree. Patterson had had some advantages unavailable to most black women. Although born in North Carolina of slave parents, she had been reared as a free black in Ohio, a state noted for its progressive higher education.[1] The great majority of black women did not have Patterson's advantages. In seeking academic education on either the secondary or collegiate level, most of them had even more obstacles to overcome than did white women. In addition to barriers of sex and race, poverty and geographic location stood in their way more frequently than they did for white women. This situation was particularly characteristic of black women living in the South.

Because slaves had been forbidden by Southern laws to learn to read and write, it is not surprising that few ex-slaves of either sex were prepared to receive secondary or collegiate education during the first few decades after the Civil War. Opportunities for secondary education gradually

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Kowaliga School (Alabama), 1909. (General Education Board 1054. Alabama 29. Rockefeller Archive Center. Reprinted by permission.)

The Purpose of Blacks' Academic Education

The form of blacks' post-elementary education was publicly debated for nearly fifty years, from the founding of Hampton Institute in 1868 to the death of Booker T. Washington in 1915. The philosophy of the founders of Hampton and Tuskegee was that the overwhelming majority of blacks and the South as a whole could profit mainly from industrial and vocational training. (See Module 2 of this series "Black Women's Vocational Education.") The other point of view, that blacks could profit from academic post-elementary education just as whites did, was argued persuasively by a number of black educators, the best known of whom was black sociologist and educator W.E.B. Du Bois.

Although Du Bois spoke and wrote primarily about college education for blacks, his points applied to secondary education as well. Educated at Fisk and Harvard, he knew the advantages of a liberal education. He argued that blacks needed to develop leaders and that could be done best by offering them the same type of liberal studies that were available to whites. This leadership would come from a "Talented Tenth" who could then work on uplifting the remainder of the race. Du Bois did not want simply a mirror of white education; he believed that blacks should be made aware of the accomplishments of their race and should be trained to serve others. To do so, black leaders would need data on the status of blacks, and so he also supported the idea that black colleges should be the centers of sociological research on blacks.[2]

Other supporters of academic education for blacks were not always as articulate as Du Bois, but they also argued that academic education could best produce leaders for black communities. Consequently, mainly academic institutions stressed their role in preparing people for the ministry and teaching. If the South were going to remain segregated, these needs had to be filled, and therefore academic education for at least a few was needed.

One white nineteenth century educator who supported college education for blacks was William Torrey Harris. Known both as a philosopher and as superintendent of the St. Louis, Missouri, public schools, Harris decried the movement toward industrial education for anyone because he thought that technology was growing so rapidly that a narrow industrial education would make its recipient obsolete. Instead, he advocated a traditional academic curriculum which would provide versatility in adjusting to a rapidly changing marketplace. Applying these ideas to blacks in the late 1890s made him, in this area, a man "before his time."[3]

Blacks were willing recipients of traditional academic education. Having rightly connected the educational attainment of whites with their socio-economic position, blacks were understandably eager to get that education for themselves. Consequently, their enthusiasm for the classical academic tradition was sometimes greater than their readiness to receive it. In some cases they failed to realize the extent of the academic preparation needed in order to tackle Greek, Latin, and other secondary subjects of the day. Although their schools may have been called "institutes," "seminaries," or "colleges," they mainly functioned in their earliest years as elementary schools because a majority of the pupils had not had an earlier opportunity to attend school and still needed to learn the academic basics. These schools may have offered secondary or even college courses to a small minority of their student bodies, but most of their classes were at the middle elementary level, what might be third through sixth grades today.

The black female's place in this controversy was frequently unclear. While educators debated the academic or vocational nature of blacks' post-elementary education and the degree of liberal studies needed, few argued over the nature of women's education. A woman's sex was her destiny. Indeed, many of the opinions expressed about black women's education sounded remarkably similar to what was said about white women's; although teacher training for women was fine, their main responsibility was to their husbands and their children. Virtually no one was interested in preparing women for community leadership except as teachers or as appendages to their husbands. Lucy C. Laney, black educator and feminist, outlined in 1899 the responsibilities of educated black women: to develop their family's hygiene habits, to teach young children, to instruct their less fortunate neighbors in proper housekeeping, to teach in church schools, and to inspire men and boys to improved ways of living.[4]

Before the Civil War

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developed in the late nineteenth century largely in private schools which frequently were founded by missionary societies. Collegiate education was generally a twentieth century development, evolving first from the private institutions just mentioned and later from state initiative. As these educational opportunities appeared, they stirred up considerable debate as to what was appropriate education for blacks beyond the elementary level. Black women's education was caught in the middle of this debate as well as in controversies about what was proper academic education for women.

Founding of the Colleges

Private Coeducational Colleges

Most of today's private black colleges can trace their origins to the early post Civil War decades when missionary groups founded numerous schools for the ex-slaves. The vast majority of these schools were coeducational because they needed as many students as possible to remain open. The schools which eventually evolved into colleges were generally in cities or rural areas where the black population was sizeable because most blacks could not afford to travel long distances to pursue their education. Today most of the surviving institutions are in urban centers or in rural areas which have maintained large black populations.

Fisk University in Nashville is one of the oldest and most famous of the private black colleges. It was founded in 1865 by the American Missionary Association. Like many other black colleges, most of its student body in the nineteenth century were not in its college program but in its elementary, high school, or normal school. It also prepared young men to enter the ministry. Fisk was the first black college accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 1930. In 1917 it reported that 42½% of its graduates were teachers, 19% homemakers, 7% were physicians, dentists, or pharmacists, and 3% were ministers. Other occupations reported included lawyers, business people, and civil servants. The Fisk women were largely normal graduates; of the reported 42½% who were teachers, 34% had completed normal training, and 7% had earned college degrees.[5] The percentage of homemakers at that time also reflects the more comfortable economic status of educated blacks which allowed a larger portion of married women to stay at home; however, compared to the college-educated white community where a married woman working outside the home was exceptional, the percentage of black homemakers is quite low.

Atlanta was another center of black higher education. It contained Morris Brown College founded in 1881 by the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Clark College founded in 1870 by the Methodist Episcopal Church, Atlanta University founded in 1867 by the American Missionary Association, and two single sex colleges—Morehouse for men and Spelman for women. In 1929 these colleges made a union under the guidance of the General Education Board, a philanthropy sponsored mainly by the Rockefeller family to improve education in the South. Although each retained its separate identity, they agreed to cross-list course

Tuskegee Institute Chemistry Laboratory. (General Education Board records. 1045. Alabama 12. Rockefeller Archive Center. Reprinted by permission.

offerings and share library facilities. Each institution retained its own identity, and Atlanta University became the graduate school of the union.

The private black colleges of New Orleans have a similar history. Straight University was founded in 1869 by the American Missionary Association, and New Orleans University in 1873 by the Methodists. In 1935 with encouragement and financial support from the General Education Board, these schools merged to form Dillard University. It was coeducational and was affiliated with a hospital which offered medical and nursing education.

The largest of the private black colleges is in Washington, D.C. Howard University, founded in 1867 by Congregationalists, was first envisioned as a normal and theological institution. However, its scope quickly expanded. A medical school opened in 1868, and a law school was begun the following year. Since 1928 it has received annual federal appropriations which have enabled it to develop more ambitious academic programs than other private black colleges.

Not all black colleges were in large cities. A number of the remaining 110 black colleges are in what used to be rural areas or small towns. Talladega College in Talladega, Alabama, was founded in 1867 by the American Missionary Association as a primary school. Its growth led to its being the first college in the state open to blacks. Tougaloo College, located near Jackson, Mississippi, was founded two years later by the same group. Among other black colleges in rural areas are St. Paul's College founded by James Soloman Russell in 1888 in Lawrenceville, Virginia, and Rust College founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1866 in Holly Springs, Mississippi.

Private Colleges for Women

Most of the Southern black colleges were coeducational, a situation which was not true for white schools. While considerable discussion regarding the propriety of coeducation for white women slowed their admission into men's private and public universities throughout the South, this debate was nearly absent in the development of Southern black women's education. Considering the facts that coeducation's effect upon student morality was the most controversial facet of the debate and that blacks' morality (and particularly that of black women) was frequently questioned, it is paradoxical that few educators presumed a need to educate the sexes apart from each other. The explanation lies in economics and the value system of the time. Operating one coeducational school was less expensive than two single sex ones, and money for black education was scarce. Furthermore, it could be hypothesized that despite their rhetoric few private charities or the public cared sufficiently about blacks to insist upon single sex schools to protect blacks' moral health.

There were a few exceptions to the coeducational status of black schools. Schools for women were frequently called seminaries, and the earliest for black women was founded on the border of the South in Washington, D.C., in 1851 by a New England white woman, Myrtilla Miner. It was primarily a teacher training institute which became Miner Teachers College and is today a part of the coeducational University of the District of Columbia.

Within the South itself the earliest woman's school was Scotia Seminary in North Carolina, founded in 1866 by the Presbyterian Board of Missions. Like many black schools of its day, it was largely an elementary school for its earliest decades. Having as its purpose to train "women leaders in the education of and social service for their race," it is fitting that Scotia's most famous graduate was Mary McLeod Bethune, who later founded her own college.[6] The seminary became Scotia Woman's College in 1916. The Presbyterians founded another black woman's seminary, the Barber Memorial Seminary of Anniston, Alabama, in 1896. It too eventually became a college, and in 1930 the two colleges united to become Barber-Scotia College. In 1954 the combined institution changed its charter and began admitting men.

Tillotson College in Austin, Texas, was a woman's school briefly. Founded by the American Missionary Association in 1877 as the coeducational Tillotson Collegiate and Normal Institute, it became a college in 1909 and excluded male students from 1928 to 1935. It joined Samuel Huston College to become Huston-Tillotson College in 1952.

The most famous of the black woman's schools was what evolved into Spelman College in Atlanta. It began as the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, founded in 1881 by New England teachers Sophia B. Packard and Harriet E. Giles, and was initially sponsored by the Woman's American Baptist Missionary Association. Designed primarily to teach religion, it was only open to black women over fifteen until it established a model school two years later for its teacher education students. The year after its founding John D. Rockefeller Sr. heard Packard speak about the needs of the school and soon became its most generous financial supporter. Consequently, the school changed its name to Spelman Seminary in honor of Rockefeller's parents-in-law.

Spelman remained a seminary for nearly fifty years. However, it began offering college degrees in conjunction with the nearby black men's college Morehouse in 1901, but only a few women took advantage of the opportunity. By 1923 only 30 Spelman graduates had received college degrees.[7] Spelman today is the better known of the two remaining black women's colleges.

Bennett College, the other surviving black woman's college, in Greensboro, North Carolina, was founded 1873 as a coeducational institution by the Methodists, and it did not become a woman's college until the college was reorganized in 1926. At that time the enrollment was largely female, and so the Women's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Church decided to make it a woman's college. Bennett has the distinction of being the only black woman's college ever to have had a woman president, Dr. Willa B. Player, who served from 1955 to 1966.

Public Colleges

The establishment of public higher education for blacks was due largely to three factors: the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, the need for teachers created by the proliferation of elementary schooling, and the need to produce community professionals and leaders. In addition, blacks themselves added pressure for the improvement of their public higher educational opportunities.

The first impetus for establishing state supported schools for blacks came largely from the Morrill Acts. Passed in 1862, the first Morrill Act provided funds that encouraged the states to establish agricultural and technical education for their citizens. After the war a number of Southern states founded appropriate institutions for whites, but only Mississippi, South Carolina, and Virginia used any of their funds for blacks. Mississippi founded in 1871 what is today known as Alcorn State, and South Carolina founded what is today South Carolina State College; Virginia used some of its funds to support programs at Hampton Institute. (See module two "Black Women's Vocational Education" for a discussion of Hampton.)

When the act was renewed in 1890, a provision ensured that funds would go to both races, and within a decade other Southern states began using Morrill funds to improve black education either by establishing a state-supported black institution or by assigning funds to an already established institution. Since the act specified agricultural and mechanical education, blacks frequently received junior high or high school level industrial education rather than the advanced college level technical and agricultural training that was offered to whites. The choices of each sex for the technical component were predictable: male students learned agricultural and mechanical trades while girls learned domestic science. At the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical Institute, the curriculum was weighted so heavily in favor of "male" subjects that black women were excluded from the school from 1900 to 1926.[8]

The need for teachers was the second factor in the development of black public higher education. Most of the black Morrill schools had some sort of normal program for teacher training, though these programs until the 1910s or '20s were likely to be at the high school level. Normal training was especially important to the educational advancement of black women, who were more likely than men to become teachers. The normal programs also served as the highest quality public education that the state offered its black citizens. As late as 1910 the Colored Normal, Industrial, Agricultural, and Mechanical College of South Carolina, for instance, provided one of only two public high school programs for blacks in the entire state; in addition it ran a model school which provided a place in which student teachers could practice and a good quality elementary school for black children in the surrounding area.[9] In addition to the advantages to the Morrill school's students, the normal school training helped its graduates improve the education of black children throughout the state.

1964 Spelman College students elected to *Who's Who*. Author Alice Walker is at far right. (Archives of Spelman College. Reprinted by permission.

The need for black community leaders and professionals was a third impetus in the establishment of black public colleges in the South, and it also influenced their growth. As education became more important in the smooth running of an increasingly complex economy and society, the South began to realize the necessity of having more educated black community leaders than the private black schools could produce. Thus the states began to establish or add on baccalaureate programs to the Morrill schools. Tennessee, which had previously assigned its Morrill funds to Knoxville College, proclaimed in 1909 that the purpose of its newly created Agricultural and State Normal School for Negroes was "to practically train its students that they may better grasp their great economic opportunity in becoming community leaders, farmers, and teachers."[10] Its normal program was equivalent to two years of college until the mid 1920s, when it began a baccalaureate program. Virginia switched its Morrill funds from Hampton Institute to the Virginia State Normal and Industrial Institute in 1920 and authorized it two years later to begin offering a baccalaureate degree. Other Southern states did the same. As the level of black public higher education increased throughout the South, high school courses in the public colleges were gradually abandoned, reflecting the growth of black high school education at the community level.

Founding the High Schools

Oddly enough, the development of the public high school in America generally came after the establishment of public higher education and public elementary education. Most of the country established public high schools between 1870 and 1900, but the establishment of high schools for either race in the South was mainly a twentieth century development. Because of the region's straitened economic situation and its largely agrarian economy which perceived little use for more than basic literacy, growth in the number of public high schools was slow until the turn of the century. Until then, most families that sought a high school education for their children enrolled them in private academies. This situation was true of blacks as well as whites, but because of black families' lack of funds, education, and nearby schools a black child was not as likely to sent to a private academy as was a white one. In fact, for the first four decades after the Civil War, a black person with just three or four years of formal schooling was considered educated by the standards of the day.

Black secondary education gained in popularity largely through the efforts of Booker T. Washington and his campaign for industrial education. Consequently, early black secondary education had a far stronger vocational character than did white high school education of the time, and the role of academics as means of fostering critical thinking and developing a well rounded person was seldom considered. (See Module Two, "Black Women's Vocational Education.") Although black parents and children were often displeased with this industrial emphasis, most had little choice and settled for that type of secondary education rather than none at all. Many circumvented the industrial curriculum by taking the normal training which was offered in the high schools. It served as a "back door" through which blacks got the academic training they sought. This situation was true both in the private schools and later in the public ones.

Private High Schools

Especially in their early years private schools were generally divisions of larger entities—either the advanced section of an elementary school or the lower section of a college or junior college. When the first case was true, there were often few students enrolled at the high school level and instruction was poor; in the second case, frequently high school students comprised the majority of the entire institution, and the quality of work may have been good. At some of the larger black colleges, the secondary division may have served as a model school in which student teachers could practice. Schools which received funds from major philanthropies almost always accompanied their academic instruction with some degree of industrial work in keeping with the terms of their grant. In large cities which had publicly funded programs for industrial work, a private high school might exist as an academic alternative and be strictly academic. Avery Institute in Charleston, South Carolina, was an example of this. Founded in the 1860s by the American Missionary Association, Avery offered only normal training and college preparatory work.[11]

Typically, the high school program of a private school was called the preparatory level, implying its role in preparing students for college. If a school also trained teachers, it frequently had a normal track as well. Although the two tracks may have overlapped somewhat, the normal track generally assumed no more schooling afterwards. Paine College in Augusta, Georgia, had in 1925, for example, a junior high, a senior high, a two-year normal course, and a college program. The normal program led to teacher certification without additional college work. The normal course at Selma University in Alabama was described as "a high school course with Bible study throughout the four years and with elementary Psychology and methods, in the senior year."[12] Since more women than men went into teaching and more men than women went on to college, girls generally outnumbered boys in the normal track and were the minority in the preparatory.

What eventually became one of the most famous normal and preparatory schools for black women in the South was founded by Mary McLeod Bethune in Daytona, Florida, in 1904. All boarding students were women, though men were admitted as day students. In 1923 the school united with the Cookman Institute for boys. Although initially offering some industrial training, the Bethune-Cookman Collegiate Institute rapidly became a college preparatory institution and by 1925 was cited as "the best secondary school for Negroes in Florida."[13] Bethune interrupted her presidency in the 1930s to serve as the head of the National Youth Administration program under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a position which brought recognition to both herself and institution she had created. (For more information about Bethune, see the excerpt from the interview with Lucy Miller Mitchell.)

A few private black high schools did not evolve into colleges. One of the most famous, the Palmer Memorial Institute in North Carolina, was founded in 1901 by a black woman, Charlotte Hawkins Brown. It remained as a college preparatory boarding school for the children of elite black families until 1971 when it closed its doors as the increasing availability of quality public education for blacks precipitated a decline in enrollment.[14] Still functioning in Mississippi as a private college preparatory school for blacks is the Piney Woods Country Life School, founded in 1909 by a black graduate of the University of Iowa, Lawrence C. Jones.

The Character of Mary McLeod Bethune

With Mrs. Bethune, there were just no short cuts, and another part of the character training, shall I call it, would be through these phrases that she would use, like "Whatever you do, do it to the best of your ability." Over and over, you would find, "Whatever you do, do it to the best of your ability," and so this feeling about the thoroughness—to this day, any kind of sloppiness disturbs me greatly. I think another contribution that I would say she made to my life, Cheryl, was her attitude toward work. For instance, she would say, "Any work is honest however humble," and "In whatever you do, strive to be an artist." Wasn't that a concept? To have it drilled into you, that whatever you do, strive to be an artist.

Orderliness was another concept that became a part of my life, and even as I grow to be almost eighty years old, I cannot bear to be disorderly. It may be just a tiny thing, but it does become a part of the expression of your living. I can remember many times, as adolescents will, we'd be tired at night and we'd sort of just drop our clothes anywhere. This is when I became a boarding student at the school, and she would come around and look in our rooms at night, and we had these clothes just strewn all over the place. Gently we were awakened, we had to get up and put those clothes in a neat way in our chairs. I give those little incidents because it does show a facet of this woman and the influence that she had on these students.

This was a woman of strong religious beliefs. We all had to gather once a day—and this was a small group of 150 girls—for her chapel talks. And I say here that she wove into the warp and woof of our personality and character her philosophy of life, her inspiration, her deep religious fervor; it was all there. And she gave to us a feeling that through God's power all things are possible. But it was also a time, and you'll see the relevance of this a little later, Cheryl, but it was also a time when she drilled into her students our obligation to help the less fortunate of our people. Again one of her constant expressions was, "you are being trained to serve, go out into our community and be an example of what education training can mean to an individual." We heard this over and over again. "Help our fellow man." And to me those admonitions became a part, again, of my character development and in whatever community I have lived, I have always engaged in activities that meant community improvement.

Excerpt from interview of Lucy Miller Mitchell by Cheryl Gilkes, June 17 and 24 and July 1, 6, and 25, 1977. Black Women's Oral History Project, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Printed by permission. After graduating from college, Miller subsequently taught for a year in Bethune's school.

Public High Schools

Between 1900 and 1915 the South established over 600 four-year public high schools for whites and nearly 600 three-year ones, but only 64 public ones existed for blacks, and they were located mainly in cities.[15] Supplementing those were county training schools which were begun in rural areas beginning in the 1910s, but they seldom included more than two years of high school work. (See module 2, "Black Women's Vocational Education.") Consequently, black youths' opportunity to get a high school education was highly dependent upon their geographical location and their economic circumstances. Urban youth had more access to schooling than did their rural counterparts; if no high school were available and a family had money to spend on education, a person could be sent to board at a private black school, but most black families had to depend on public facilities.

Another factor in access appeared to be sex. A 1923 study of under-age and over-age students in the county training schools indirectly produced results that indicated that black girls were more likely than black boys to continue their education. The survey showed that although substantially more girls than boys attended the county training schools at every level—1 through 12—the difference grew wider in the upper grades. Nearly 10% more girls attended than boys overall, but in the upper grades alone—9 through 12—the difference grew to 42%.[16] This trend reflected the practice in many Southern black families of sending the older sons to work after elementary school to help

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Public High Schools

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support the family, while girls and sometimes younger sons remained in school. Completing a high school education improved black girls' chances of finding good positions—most often in teaching—and lessened their chances of being molested by white men because of the need to be employed in their homes or businesses as domestic servants. Their education also served as a family's economic insurance because the employment of black men was sometimes uncertain and unstable.[17] This trend continued in many black colleges; more women than men attended. However, at the more prestigious black institutions whose students were more likely to come from families with greater economic security, more men than women earned college degrees; women typically enrolled in normal programs.

The development of public black high schools in Virginia was perhaps typical of their development elsewhere in the South; but, since Virginia generally provided better public education than did many other Southern states, its record on black public high schools may have actually been better. Virginia's first public high school for blacks was organized in 1873 in Petersburg, which had a large black population, and a second in Richmond in 1876; two more were established by 1900. Then progress slowed as the popularity of industrial education for blacks grew and less attention was paid to academics. Although the number of white high schools in the state grew from 50 to 360 between 1905 and 1910, only three more high schools were established for blacks between 1900 and 1920. Instead, numerous rural areas established county training schools for blacks which offered industrial education and junior high work. In the early 1920s eight other Virginia cities began steps toward creating public black high schools.[18]

Because of the scarcity of high schools and poverty of many black families, the rate of high school attendance in the first third of the century remained low. Although more high schools were built in the 1920s, 26.5% of Southern blacks still lived in counties in 1932-33 that provided less than four years of public high school work. The percentages varied from highs of 58% in Arkansas and 51% in Mississippi to lows of 3% in North Carolina and 0% and 4% respectively in the border states of Delaware and Maryland.[19] In the Southern and border states the total number of four-year high schools for blacks was 807, but only 367 of them were accredited by their respective state accrediting bodies.[20] While 33.5% of whites of high school age in the South were actually enrolled in high school, only less than 5% of blacks were.[21]

As the century wore on, high school attendance and graduation rates slowly increased. By 1940 9.8% of the total black population were high school graduates, and ten years later that percentage had increased to 14.4.[22] This increase reflected national trends towards more education, but it also reflected developments in the Southern black communities. Even though blacks had been effectively denied voting rights since the turn of the century, they had become an increasingly noticeable influence in local developments. The series of lawsuits which integrated Southern public graduate schools, the struggle for salary equalization between black and white teachers, and simple pressure from the black community had stimulated the development and expansion of black high school education. White Southern politicians were beginning to realize that if they truly wished to maintain segregated public schooling, the facilities would honestly have to be equal. Although their motives for improving black high schools were faulty, the result was improved educational opportunity.

The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case, which declared that segregated schools were inherently unequal, dashed the hopes of many white Southerners of maintaining segregated schools, and the region began a very slow process of integrating its schools. One of the most famous incidents in this process was the integration of Little Rock High School in 1957, and six girls were among the nine black students who tried to enroll. The resulting resistance by Arkansas's governor forced the involvement of the federal government and then the closing of all the city's public schools for a year.

Secondary Vocational Training

Dr. Faustine C. Jones-Wilson, now a professor at Howard University and author of *A Traditional Model of Educational Excellence: Dunbar High School of Little Rock, Arkansas*, recalled her experiences at Dunbar in the 1940s in an interview with the author September 27, 1985:

> ELI: Did the curriculum of Dunbar offer different courses according to sex, such as home economics for girls and shop for boys?
>
> FJW: Yes. I remember that the girls had a year of Clothing in seventh grade and a year of Foods in eighth grade. In ninth grade, girls took Laundry. These were required courses in grades 7-9. It is interesting that white girls did not have laundry included in their curriculum.
>
> As best as I can recall, elective courses in Clothing & Foods were offered girls in 10, 11, 12. Trade Clothing was a vocational option for girls. This choice could be made singly—a vocational only—or with regular high school required courses. The latter option provided the female graduate with a regular high school diploma and a trade certificate that would make her employable as a tailor or as a "finished" seamstress—say at high-class department store or a women's fashion store.
>
> With respect to Foods , I recall that we had several kitchens with varying degrees of equipment and sophistication. There was an "unfinished" kitchen where service techniques were emphasized. We were taught to set the table properly, and how to serve the family and guests correctly. There was a green or blue kitchen (I forget which) with "intermediate" facilities, and a white kitchen with deluxe features. The idea was that girls would be prepared to cook and serve in any kind of kitchen in different types of homes. I am sure that it was assumed that many of us would be domestic servants or laundry workers.
>
> Our laundry course included heavy commercial equipment use, as well as home-style washers and how to iron on commercial presses as well as how to use a regular home-type iron. We learned to stretch curtains (after starching them heavily) on the pronged stretchers. Most of us hated Laundry, but liked Clothing and Foods well enough at the 7th and 8th grade levels. . . .
>
> In the 11th grade many of us, girls and boys, took bookkeeping—even though we were college-bound. We also took Geometry. We had to be employable, if need be.
>
> In the 12th grade many girls (including me), took shorthand and typing. Our teachers were strict and always emphasized doing things right. Only a few boys took shorthand and typing, for males were ridiculed if they selected this "female" option.

Shaping Academic Education, 1900-1950

The Colleges

As was the case with high school attendance, black women were more likely to attend college than men, thus reversing the trend among whites. However, black women were enrolled more frequently than men in normal programs and the number of their baccalaureate degrees did not outnumber men's until 1940.[23] Black women's post-secondary education was designed more for practical work in the black community than as traditional academic studies; most women in the early and mid-twentieth century became teachers or homemakers.[24] At Paine College in Augusta, Georgia, at the end of the Second World War 70% of graduates were women, 90% of whom went into teaching; after the war more women began moving into social work and other fields. Women tended to return to rural areas while men migrated to large cities, entering teaching, the ministry, and postal and government services.[25] This pattern was typical throughout the South.

Overall, blacks' access to higher education increased remarkably throughout the South as the twentieth century wore on, but it still did not equal to that of whites. Black higher education was underfunded and frequently isolated from the academic mainstream. Blacks did not have the same access to public higher education as did whites; in 1930 the ratio of blacks to whites in public colleges of the South averaged 1:16, with a high in North Carolina of 1:6 to a low in Texas of 1:39.[26]

The curriculum at black colleges varied significantly from school to school and certainly evolved as decades passed, but on the whole private black colleges offered more college work in the traditional liberal arts mold, while public colleges offered more vocationally oriented studies. This division was due to the schools' different heritages. The students at the private black colleges, which had most frequently been founded by missionary societies, were instilled with their early teachers' appreciation of the liberal studies tradition. The largely white Southern state governments which founded the public schools were interested in economic improvement which they perceived would come most quickly through direct vocational training for black students. These curricular distinctions between private and public black colleges were slow to fade in the twentieth century. Even past mid century private colleges generally offered a broader, more traditional curriculum, while public institutions offered more vocationally oriented programs.[27]

Few black students went into scientific fields, and two likely reasons why were inadequate secondary preparation and inability of financially strapped institutions to provide adequate laboratories and facilities. In 1940 a survey reported that 23% of black college students chose vocational majors (agriculture, industrial arts, home economics), 22.6% chose humanities, and 22.3% chose education. Between 1940 and 1963 the number of black vocational majors declined from 23% to 6.1%; other majors experiencing losses were the humanities and physical science. Simultaneously the number of blacks choosing business, education, the arts, health, and social sciences increased.[28]

College Class. Huston-Tillotson College. (General Education Board records. 1054. 849 Annual Report, 1952. Rodkefeller Archive Center. Reprinted by permission.)

Men and women were usually not offered quite the same curriculum in either public or private black colleges. In some cases their academic opportunities were not even the same; Paine College and Fisk University, for instance, offered free tuition to men who were planning to enter the ministry but made no similar offer to women. In nearly every college women were frequently required to take one or more home economics courses in addition to their other studies regardless of their vocational preferences.

In 1933 Lucy D. Slowe, dean of women at Howard University, surveyed forty-four black colleges about their offerings for women. Noting that it was no longer appropriate to assume that every woman would spend her entire adult life working in the home and that the increasingly complex world required better informed citizens, Slowe argued that colleges needed to broaden their curricular offerings for women and to give women more opportunities for leadership. She reported that less than 10% of black college women were enrolled in political science, economics, psychology, or sociology and that fewer than fifty percent of the colleges had student government associations. She also criticized the goal of educating women only to be the adjuncts of men and the lack of women in colleges' policy-making positions.[29] Her article apparently caused

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Pay Inequity: One Woman's Experience

In 1921 the first three black women ever to receive Ph.D. degrees graduated within several weeks of each other. One of them, Eva Beatrice Dykes, taught at Howard University for a number of years before assuming a position at Oakwood College in Alabama where the following incident occurred.

> One of the men teachers here, by the name of Sumpter, said to me, "Oh, Miss Dykes, did you get your promotion?" And I said, "What promotion?" And he said, "Well, you know, all the teachers were promoted." I said, "Well, I didn't get any promotion." So when I saw President Peterson, I said to him, "President Peterson, I understand that some of the teachers got a promotion. And I didn't get one." And I was just like a child, curious, you know, why I didn't. And he said to me in his inimitable way, with his hands stretched out wide—I can see him now, standing on the steps of Moran Hall—"Well, you are a woman. That's why you didn't get it." And he was one of my dear friends. I said, "President Peterson, if I go over here to the store and want to buy a loaf of bread, do I get a reduction because I am a woman? If I want to go downtown and buy clothes do I get a reduction because I am a woman? So that has existed all down through the ages, that discrepancy.

Excerpt from interview of Eva B. Dykes by Merze Tate, November 30-December 1, 1977. Black Women Oral History Project, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge Massachusetts. Printed by permission.

Shaping Academic Education

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no immediate major curricular shifts, and a number of her conclusions were simply ahead of their time. Although the number of black students studying the social sciences grew from 11.7% in 1940 to 17% in 1963 and students were gradually given more control over campus life, Slowe's concern about the purpose of women's education and women as college officials did not receive widespread attention. As the decades wore on, black women's majors gradually changed. In 1963 their top choices of major were elementary education, social science, education, English, and biology.[30]

Nursing also became an increasing popular major in mid-century as hospital based nurse *training* gave way to college based nurse *education* with attendant baccalaureate degrees. Black women headed up two of the earliest degree granting nursing programs: Rita Miller at Dillard University in New Orleans and Mary Elizabeth Lancaster Carnegie at Florida A & M.[31]

Other careers which became increasingly popular with women college students in the mid twentieth century were social work and librarianship. Since both of these often required advanced degrees and opportunities for blacks to do graduate work in most Southern states were limited, Atlanta University became the center of preparation for both of these areas.

Women were represented on the faculty of nearly every black college. They tended to hold the lower faculty ranks and teach in traditionally women's areas (teacher training, fine arts, home economics). Many served as matrons in the women's residence hall or as deans of women. In a number of cases they did not have degrees commensurate with male faculty which may have been a factor in their lower pay, but that situation was not always true as the excerpt on pay inequity reveals. Spelman, quite possibly because it was a women's college, had more women on the faculty than most schools; in fact, it had all female presidents, albeit white ones, until 1953.

High School Curriculum

Many of the early black high schools combined academic and industrial programs. The latter were generally favored by whites and most educators of either race who thought that industrial education built character and provided more useful skills and more rapid assimilation of blacks into the work force. The first major national report on black education, published in 1916, decried black resistance to industrial education and black's faith in academics.[32]

Black families, however, often favored academic programs because they correctly perceived that an academic education was likely to lead to better jobs or an opportunity for further education. Many families actually moved to new communities where they thought their children could get better schooling; in cases where only industrial education was provided, they struggled to pay tuition to private academic high schools. Sadie Green Oglesby, a well known black educator and civic leader in Charleston, South Carolina, was taken out of the nearby public high school in the 1910s and placed in Avery School, a private academy, because her father did not approve of the public school's agricultural curriculum.[33]

The high school curriculum remained predictably stereotyped with girls taking home economics and boys taking shop. One of the most outstanding black public high schools in the South, Dunbar in Little Rock, Arkansas, offered a complete line of vocational courses along with a full complement of academic offerings. (See the interview with Dr. Faustine C. Jones-Wilson.) Slowly, however, the demand for academics first in urban areas and then in rural ones forced the inclusion of increasing numbers of academic courses in black high schools.

Extra Curricular Life

High School

Extracurricular life for black secondary students was somewhat dependent on the type of institution offering the instruction. Private black boarding schools, which frequently served students from rural areas where no public high school was yet available, had rules similar to those in black colleges with stricter rules for girls than boys. In the 1940s, for instance, Cotton Plant Academy, located in a town of same name in Arkansas, allowed boys to leave the campus unchaperoned but not the girls.[34] However, regardless of whether a school was public or private, good manners were stressed more for girls than for boys.

One of the most highly touted public high schools for blacks in the South, Dunbar in Little Rock, opened its doors in the late 1920s and by 1930 offered an array of extra-curricular activities. Many like Student Council, Health Club, Thrift Club, Citizenship Club, Monitor's Club, Library Club, Orchestra, Story Tellers Club, Dramatic Club, Science Club were open to both sexes, but the focus of some of them like health, thrift, and citizenship appeared to be an echo of the character training so prevalent in earlier black education. Other clubs served only one sex. The boys could choose from Boy Scouts, several athletic clubs, and the Boys' Glee Club, while the girls could participate in the Girls' Reserve, Campfire Girls, one athletic club, and a Girls' Glee Club.[35] By the 1940 activities were less sex-segregated and more closely resembled high schools today: most clubs were not restricted by gender, and the Glee Clubs had been combined into a choir. The girls had cheerleading and basketball.[36]

College

Extracurricular life at virtually all Southern black colleges in the first half of the twentieth century was restrictive and even Victorian. Although the degree of restriction varied from one institution to another and lessened as the decades moved on, much of early twentieth century black college life was enmeshed in regulations and rules that are quite foreign to college students today. Behind these rules lay subtle racism and sexism. A number of colleges justified their close scrutiny of students' lives as a means of improving blacks' perceived low moral standards and of educating them in proper ways of living. Since the moral reputation of black women was even less highly regarded than that of men, colleges forced women to live under tighter rules. Moral improvement was the most frequent reason cited for tight control of students, but there was a more subtle one. College trustees, administrators, and faculty were fearful that a freer atmosphere might prompt student actions which would generate unfavorable publicity, jeopardize future philanthropic or legislative support, and diminish relations with the surrounding community. Consequently, rules that had been abolished in white institutions long ago persisted in a number of black institutions well into the twentieth century.

Black women in college were treated differently from men because their life roles were considered distinctive and their morality in greater jeopardy, perceptions that were slow to change. Evidence of these distinctions were common in college literature. From 1894 until early 1930's, for instance, the Fisk University *Catalog* carried a statement that it recognized "the absolute necessity of the *right education* of the girls and young women of the race whose elevation and advancement it was founded to promote. The highest interest of every race and community depends largely upon the intelligence, frugality, virtue, and noble aspirations of its women."[37] A Spelman alumna noted that the aim of her alma mater was to "train homemakers, teachers and nurses, and through religious influences to help elevate the Negro race as a whole."[38] This special attitude toward women affected all aspects of their college lives. In addition to the impact it made on their curricula, it affected their dress, habits, and relations with the other sex. (See excerpt "College

Women of Atlanta University.") Although white colleges had abandoned uniforms in the 1800s, a number of black colleges were very much concerned with dress. Although both sexes were frequently warned not to bring fancy clothes to the campus, college women more frequently than the men were sometimes required to wear uniforms—usually navy blue skirts and blouses for weekday wear and white dresses for Sundays and special occasions. This practice was one of several which eventually caused a student revolt at Fisk. W. E. B. Dubois, a Fisk alumnus, observed in 1924 that "College women are put in uniforms in a day when we reserve uniforms for these who are organized to murder, for lackeys and for insane asylums and jails. Not only is the system of uniforms at Fisk ineffective and wasteful, but its method of enforcement is humiliating and silly."[39]

Fisk also had among other restrictions a "lights out" policy at 10:00 p.m., rules prohibiting smoking, prohibitions against men and women students walking together on campus, compulsory chapel, and censorship of the student newspaper. This situation finally caused a student revolt in 1924-25 and the resignation of the president. Reform was instituted gradually, but the double standard was retained. Men were allowed to smoke in 1927, but women had to wait until 1935. the "lights out" policy was lifted only in the men's dorms.[40]

Social activities were carefully regulated, and many centered around religion. Many institutions had daily chapel programs plus church school and worship on Sunday morning. Even as recently as 1950, Paine College advertised its daily chapel programs to tourists on their way to Florida: "Do you enjoy them [Negro spirituals] as only the Southern Negro can sing them?" queried its brochure.[41] The programs' purpose was not only to benefit the participating students but also to attract gifts from visitors; naturally, the emphasis on spirituals reinforced traditional stereotypes.

Many social activities were designed only for one sex. Black colleges, like many white ones of the time, had a number of literary societies which met to discuss issues or literature and provide fellowship. The Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial Institute had two such societies in 1926, one for each sex, and considered these organizations so important for the students' development that membership was compulsory.[42] At a number of colleges these societies met on Saturday nights and provided weekend entertainment.

As the century progressed, the literary societies gradually gave way to social clubs. At Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial Institute where more women than men enrolled, there were seven social clubs for women and five for men in 1926.[43] Beginning in the early 1900s these clubs began to be transformed into sororities and fraternities. The two earliest black sororities, Alpha Kappa Alpha and Delta Sigma Theta, were founded at Howard University in 1908 and 1913 respectively. In the early 1920s two more black sororities were founded: Zeta Phi Beta in 1920 and Sigma Gamma Rho in 1922. All four sororities quickly expanded beyond social activities into service to the black communities.

Since the majority of black institutions did not allow their students as much freedom as did Howard, students often were not allowed to form a Greek organization on campus. Consequently, the sororities were frequently founded in the surrounding community; even after most black colleges invited the sororities to organize on campus, the tradition of strong lifetime alumnae involvement remained.

An important aspect of many black women's extracurricular life was college employment. A 1930 survey indicated that twenty-eight percent of black women worked while they attended college, while only 0.64% of white women attending private women's colleges and 7% in public coeducational ones did so.[44] Black women's high rate of employment reflected not only the smaller financial resources of many black families but also the expectation that black women as well as men needed to be prepared to earn a living since work for black men was not always available or steady. Although institutions for blacks and for whites shared the aim of developing cultured, well-mannered citizens, black colleges generally had a stronger emphasis on producing citizens of both sexes who were prepared to work outside the home.

Social activism became an increasingly prominent dimension to black women's extracurricular life as the twentieth century wore on. In the 1930s a number of black colleges ran workshops and clinics to improve black health and home life, and women often initiated their organization. Women demonstrated a more public activism in the 1950s and 1960s as they participated in civil rights activities. In 1956 Autherine Lucy, the daughter of a sharecropper, became the first black to be admitted to the University of Alabama. Although she was expelled three days after her admission because of violence directed against her, her courageous stand set an example for others. In 1963 Vivian Malone became the first black to graduate from the university. Spelman students participated in many civil rights activities taking place in Atlanta, and one Spelman graduate, Marian Wright Edelman, was involved in the founding of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. She subsequently became the first became the first black woman to pass the bar in Mississippi. Later she founded and led the Children's Defense Fund, a nonprofit children's advocacy group in Washington, D. C. In 1980 she became the second woman and the first black to chair Spelman's Board of Trustees.[45]

In 1972 the passage of the amendments to the Higher Education Act brought a new dimension of equity into the education of all women. The portion of the act known as Title IX said that:

> No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

By the time the government developed regulations interpreting Title IX, educators were already braced for some changes. Although Title IX's biggest impact has come in the area of equity in athletics, it stimulated other changes too. In the realm of education, Title IX was for women what Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act was to blacks. Title IX was followed two years

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College Women of Atlanta University: 1900

GFB: Why didn't they let boarding students, why didn't they let them go off campus?

BEU: Well, they went off campus only by permission and with a matron, with somebody who took them. The girls would go to town on Saturday afternoon. Other afternoons, I guess some other afternoons, but there was a woman who came and chaperoned the girls. Boys were allowed to go off campus certain hours after school, but the girls were not. The girls stayed on the campus unless they had special permission and were accompanied by somebody who was in charge.

GFB: Right. Because I know that happened at Spelman, the young ladies used to have to wear their dresses and gloves when they went downtown. Was that required of A. U. girls?

BEU: No.

GFB: No?

BEU: No, they didn't have to do that. They expected them to look presentable, of course. All I know is I just wore whatever I had. It was very presentable because I came from the country, and my mother made all of my clothes; they were very simple dresses and I was small.

Excerpt from interview of Bazoline Usher by Gay Francine Banks, March 22, 1977. Black Womens Oral History Project, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Printed by permission.

Black Women in Academic Education Today

It is difficult to know what is happening to blacks in academic education today because recent data are often promptly published and are not often broken down by race *and* sex. Some observers claim that research about minorities in higher education insufficent and that recent cutbacks and delays have even made the situation worse. The main government report about higher education, the Higher Education General Information Survey, has been running so far behind in recent years that its data are less useful that they could be.[47] Howard University's Institute for the Study of Educational Policy, which was established in 1974 as a research center on issues affecting equal opportunity for minorities in higher education, has recently been dismantled as a result of budget cuts. Added to this problem is the fact that few studies which have been done have examined minority groups by sex. It is likely that many disseminators of data simply assume that all blacks have the same educational experience regardless of sex and that all women have the same experience regardless of race, assumptions which unwittingly display racist and sexist attitudes. Because of this lack of sufficiently specific data, it is difficult to assess accurately what is happening to black women. The data that are available indicate both increasing achievement and persistent problems.

Secondary Schools Today

Black women of high school age have lost ground in the past decade due in part to the related problems of poverty, insufficient education, teenage pregnancy, and the lack of available jobs. More fourteen and fifteen year-old black women dropped out of school in 1981 (3%) than ten years earlier (1%); although the figures for black males of the same age also climbed during that period, the rise in male dropouts went only from 2.3% to 2.7%. For sixteen and seventeen year olds the news was better as the dropout rate decreased over the same period, but the decrease was not so sharp for females (9.2% to 8.7%) as for males (9.4% to 7.2%).[48] These figures may reflect the problems of the high pregnancy rate among teenage blacks. Although the actual rate of teenage pregnancy is now declining among blacks (but still increasing for whites), black girls currently account for half of all teenage births.[49] The need for child care may be only one disincentive to remaining in school. The fact that each year of school does not currently increase employment for blacks may be another.[50] These factors are prime contributors to single black women heading the poorest families in the country with a median income of $7510 in 1981.[51] Given these data, it is not surprising that between 1970 and 1982 households headed by black females increased from 28 to 41% compared to a 9% to 12% increase for whites.[52] These data on the dropout rate, job availability, and poverty combine to predict a depressing and worsening cycle of deprivation.

1976 Spelman College graduation. (Archives of Spelman College. Reprinted with permission.)

For black women who remain in high school, the news is better. They outperform their male counterparts but are still seriously deficient in academic achievement. Thirty-eight percent of black females, ages 14 to 17, are not performing at grade level as compared to 43% of males, according to the National Black Child Development Institute.[53] A study of mathematics education by the National Assessment of Educational Progress noted that blacks of all ages gained more than whites in mathematical knowledge between 1977 and 1981, but the study did not break down the data by sex.[54] Another study of black female participation in mathematics courses, however, indicates a need for counseling, student-teacher interaction, and administrative leadership for making a substantial difference in mathematics achievement.[55]

Overall, blacks of either sex and women of any race are less likely to enroll in an academic high school curriculum and are more likely to be in a vocational program than white males or other races.[56] This limits the numbers of black women who can continue their education.

Higher Education Today

Since the percentage of black high school graduates attending college has dropped 11% between 1975 and 1981, the current overall pattern of blacks' college enrollment is not encouraging.[57] Whereas approximately 32% of whites go on to college, only 27.8% of blacks do.[58] Blacks and women are both underrepresented in academic education. Blacks, who form 11.7% of the population, only account for 9.9% of academic postsecondary education. Likewise, women disproportionately choose vocational postsecondary education.[59] In spite of these statistics, black women appear to have made modest gains in college attendance in recent decades. Black women formed 55% of the black college student population in 1962-63, 52% in 1973, and 58% in 1982.[60] Although these gains are not dramatic, they seem impressive as a countertrend to blacks' overall drop in college attendance.

Remaining in college can be a challenge. Although the dropout rate for minorities is similar to that of whites after controlling for socioeconomic factors, 48% of black college-bound seniors in 1981 came from families with incomes of less than $12,000.[61] Exacerbating the situation is that both blacks and women are likely to receive less financial aid than white men. In 1983 blacks received 4.7% less financial aid than they did in 1978, and women on the average receive less financial aid than men.[62] In 1981-82 a woman's average grant was $1,236 as compared to a man's of $1,373; low-income women received fewer Guaranteed Student Loans than did low-income men, and women are currently not allowed to count child-care expenses in computing their need.[63] The result of the likelihood of less financial aid is that minority women will attend less expensive institutions and for shorter periods of time, thus decreasing their earning power, opportunities for career advancement, and chances for earning graduate degrees.

Since 1970 and the beginning of court-ordered desegregation of public institutions, blacks of both sexes have become increasingly dispersed throughout the educational system: in 1976 18% of black students attended traditionally black institutions; in 1982 the percentage was down to 16.1%.[64] The number of black women's colleges has remained at two with Bennett in Greensboro, North Carolina, enrolling nearly 600 for the 1985-86 academic year and Spelman in Atlanta with a record enrollment of nearly 1700. Although college graduation rates among black students overall have decreased from 65% in the 1930s to 45-60% in 1978, black women are graduating in ever higher numbers.[65] In 1976 they comprised 56% of black graduating seniors and 59% in 1981.[66]

Extra Curricular Life

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later by the passage of Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) which has a goal of promoting educational equity for girls and women. It provides grants for the development of programs and materials to help achieve this goal in educational settings from preschool through higher education, social services agencies, and other educational settings.[46] The WEEA program was especially important to minority women because it was the first significant program in the nation to solicit proposals that especially sought to benefit population groups who were victims of both sexism and racism.

What happens to black women in college has attracted little research. The most recent and best known study of black college women was part of a larger study conducted by Jacqueline Fleming. In surveying black college students in both black and white colleges to determine which kind of college served black students better, she found that female students of either race became less assertive when they were educated with men. She learned that black women sometimes feel that they are less competent than men but that facts of their performance prove otherwise. In black colleges black women lose social assertiveness skills but not in predominantly white colleges where few black men are available. Nevertheless black women in white colleges suffer "from emotional pain, social isolation, or aroused fears about their competence"[67]. For black women, both predominantly white and predominantly black schools have their strengths and weaknesses for intellectual and personal growth.

Data on postgraduate education indicate that this level of education remains a source of critical concern. Although black enrollment in first-professional degree programs has increased significantly in recent years, blacks comprise only 5% of the total professional enrollment. Black women, however, represent 46% of total black enrollment in U.S. medical schools as compared to white women's 31% of total white enrollment.[68] Blacks like whites appear to be moving away from graduate school in favor of professional studies, and their enrollment in graduate study has declined. Between 1974 and 1980 black graduate enrollment dropped 8%.[69] This decline will seriously affect the availability of the black faculty in higher education who serve as role models to students of all races.

Conclusion

The assessment above black women's academic education indicates that educational equity between the races or between the sexes has not arrived. Poverty and inaccessibility of educational facilities deprived generations of black women of educational opportunity and continue to do so today. Sexist and racist stereotyping still mold available academic education, although less so today than in decades past. Little research has focused on the educational experiences of black women.

Where should black women's academic education go from here? Research needs to focus on black girl's and women's educational experiences to assess differences of sex and race and to make education more effective. On the high school level educators should increase efforts to encourage girls' careful thinking about their futures and to provide more role models of successful black women. New initiatives are needed to encourage young black women to seek college preparatory programs and widened vocational opportunity. Although these measures can also be useful on the college level, colleges need to examine their effectiveness in assisting black women develop affectively as well as cognitively. Fleming's study deserves careful scrutiny.

Despite the serious problems remaining in black women's academic education, black women have made outstanding progress since attaining their freedom just a hundred and twenty years ago. They maximized their previously limited options to achieve greater educational achievement than black men at the secondary, college, and postgraduate levels. As sexual attitudes changed, black women have taken advantage of a widened array of institutional and curricular choices. Black women's academic education has come a long way and should continue to develop to meet the ever-widening challenges of the future.

Questions for Discussion

1. How did the purpose of black women's academic education evolve over the years? What is it today? To what degree, if at all, should race and/or sex be variables in determining a person's education?
2. Supporters of women's colleges argue that an all-female environment produces graduates who are more likely to achieve than are female graduates of coeducational institutions. Recent research demonstrates, for instance, that a higher percentage of graduates of women's colleges are accepted into medical school than graduates of coeducational ones. What were the factors in developing coeducational or single-sex institutions for blacks in the South? Do you think that the rigid rules of black coeducational colleges of the early 1900's produced an enhanced environment for their women students? Why or why not?
3. Even today, the choice of students' college majors is significantly affected by their sex. This study illustrated that historically race has also been a factor. How has choice of major affected individuals' subsequent lives? To what degree should effort be made to steer people into or away from particular majors today?
4. What are some of the historical reasons that black women tend to pursue more education than black men? Do those reasons still hold true today? What kind of implication does their larger attendance hold for their future?

Activities

1. Investigate one of the historically black sororities. Information could be obtained from a chapter on a nearby campus or from a group's national office. The addresses are Alpha Kappa Alpha/5211 S. Greenwood Ave./Chicago, IL 60615; Delta Sigma Theta/1707 New Hampshire Ave. N.W./Washington, D.C. 20009; Sigma Gamma Rho/840 East 87th St./Chicago, IL 60619; Zeta Phi Beta/1734 New Hampshire Ave. N.W./Washington, D.C. 20009.
2. Examine some old high school yearbooks or annuals. Consider tracing the evolution of high school activities at a traditionally black high school through a number of years or compare activities with those in a traditionally white high school of the same year. What conclusions can you draw from your examination?
3. Interview a black graduate of a particular kind of school (women's or coeducational, segregated or integregrated, public or private) and compare the interviewee's memories to the generalizations of this module.
4. If there was an historically black high school or college in your area, learn about its current situation. How did efforts to integrate and to provide equal educational opportunity affect the institution? Develop hypotheses about the reasons for its current status.

Notes

[1]Jeanne L. Noble, *The Negro Woman's College Education* (New York: Teachers College Bureau of Publications, 1956), p. 19.

[2]Raymond Wolters, *The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 18-28.

[3]Edward A. Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School 1880-1920*, I (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 209.

[4]Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, "Self-Help Programs As Educative Activities of Black Women in the South, 1895-1925: Focus on Four Key Areas," *Journal of Negro Education*, 51, 3 (1982), 209.

[5]*Fisk University News*, 7, 12 (January, 1917), pp. 25 and 27.

[6]Hugh Victor Brown, *A History of the Education of Negroes in North Carolina* (rpt. 1960; Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1971), p. 81.

[7]Beverly Guy-Sheftall and Jo Moore Stewart, *Spelman: A Centennial Celebration, 1881-1921* (Atlanta: Spelman College, 1981), p. 44.

[8]Brown, p. 95.

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[10]*Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial Bulletin*, 1918, p. 2.

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Notes

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[46]The materials you are currently reading were produced with a WEEA grant.

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[54]*Equality and Excellence*, p. 27.

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[63]"Women and Aid," p. 3.

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